Bacteria, clams thrive in very cold water

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The discovery this year of bacteria on the seabed below near-freezing Antarctica waters may be more evidence life is possible on other planets.

In March, researchers discovered an enormous community of bacteria and clams living on the ocean floor in an area isolated for 10,000 years or more until the Larsen B Ice Shelf collapsed in 2002.

The discovery means "the chance of life happening in other places that are even more restricted is increased," Eugene Domack, a geosciences professor at Hamilton College in Clinton, N.Y., told The Washington Post Monday.

Since the bacteria evolved at a depth of 2,800 feet in far colder conditions than any other known cold-seep community, scientists say they might have unique properties useful across a wide range of industries.

But scientists told the newspaper they are worried the newly found ecosystem may not survive because of changes being caused by global warning and the subsequent collapse of the ice.

Domack and his team say they will make their final trip to the area early next year.

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